

Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

From *We Support*

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WHETHER WE are dealing with Viet-Nam, the Dominican Republic, or with the foreign aid program in general, there is one common problem which is crucial and central for all the many things we are undertaking. It is to find governments that we can support which are reasonably honest, efficient and progressive, and are trusted by their own people.



Lippmann

We are learning in Viet-Nam how difficult it is to defend a country in which there is no government which can rally its own people. We are learning in the Dominican Republic what happens when there is no recognizable legitimate government to receive our military backing and our economic help.

THE SAME difficulty is at the root of the disappointment, which is so great in this country today, at the results of the foreign aid programs. We are, to be sure, much more vividly conscious of spectacular incidents like the burning of a library, than we are of the quiet successes. Nonetheless, there are disappointments, so many of them that the Senate has now voted another installment of foreign aid with the proviso that there is to be a radical re-examination of the whole policy within the next two years.

Without attempting to guess what conclusions will be reached in these two years, it is already quite

evident that trouble arises when aid is funneled through corrupt, reactionary, or highly incompetent governments. It is not easy to find enough good governments in all the emerging and underdeveloped countries, and, if we are philosophical about it, we must not be surprised at the difficulty of finding them. The condition is baffling, but that is a concomitant of inexperience and backwardness.

Moreover, American officials who have to administer the programs are frequently in a quandary. As a general rule the most impeccably anti-Communist governments are more often than not reactionary, stupid, and corrupt—as, for example, the Batista government in pre-Castro Cuba, or the Trujillo government in the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, the more progressively minded parties or factions include almost inevitably not only the left but the Communists on the left of the left. It takes a lot more acumen and political courage for an American official to back a progressive faction than it does for him to embrace a rightist faction. This dilemma confronts us continually in our role as champion of the free world in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

NEVERTHELESS, in the task of containing the expansion of communism there is no substitute for the building up of strong and viable states which command the respect of the mass of their people. The President, of course, knows this and has frequently said it. But the tragedy of our entanglement in Viet-Nam is that we find ourselves fight-

ing what is in fact an American rear guard action to stave off the collapse and defeat of the Saigon government. In this cramped position, there is little opening or opportunity for us to use our power and our resources constructively in Southeast Asia.

We may leave it to the historians to say how and why we are painted into a corner. Our task is to bring up our resources of power and wealth, which are intact, in order to cut down our unavoidable losses to the lowest possible cost in lives and in influence.

IN OUR predicament it is a disservice, I think, to inflate and emotionalize the stakes in Viet-Nam, to make it appear that the whole future of America and of the Western world in Asia and the Pacific is going to be fought out and decided in the Vietnamese jungle. It is not going to be decided there, and it is not going to be decided in any other single place. Thus, for example, we must prepare our minds even now for the possibility that Britain will not be able to carry much longer the whole burden of her responsibilities from Aden and the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean to Singapore. There looms ahead of us the prospect of having enormous new responsibilities thrust upon us, responsibilities which do not begin and will not end with our entanglement in Saigon.

That is why, though we cannot and must not scuttle and run, we must use our resources and our wits to avoid becoming bogged down in a large land war on the Asian mainland.

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